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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - CLASSIFIED BY STATEMENT AND REASON

AF AND IO FOR FRONT OFFICE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UNSC](#) [ET](#) [ER](#)

SUBJECT: ETHIOPIAN MINISTER TEKEDA ALEMU: EEBC TERMINATION
COULD SPARK CONFLICT

CLASSIFIED BY: AMBASSADOR ALEJANDRO WOLFF FOR REASONS:
1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (C/NF) SUMMARY: Ethiopian Minister of State Tekeda Alemu Wolde Mariam told AMB Wolff during an August 30 meeting that Eritrea must withdraw its forces from the temporary security zone (TSZ) and allow UNMEE to begin monitoring the area again before Ethiopia will allow the Ethiopia Eritrea Border Commission (EEBC) to proceed with demarcation. Tekeda said Ethiopia is willing to accept the EEBC decision and wanted to create a sustainable peace, but described the Eritrean approach as unconstructive and intransigent. Tekeda said he has low expectations for the September 7 meeting of the EEBC at The Hague, but promised that Ethiopia would take as helpful an approach to discussions as possible. AMB Wolff told Tekeda that Ethiopia should think very carefully before expelling any more Norwegian diplomats from Addis Ababa. END SUMMARY.

Tekeda: EEBC Withdrawal
Could Spark Conflict

12. (C/NF) Tekeda said Ethiopia is willing to accept the EEBC decision, despite concerns that it favors Eritrea. Tekeda said that Ethiopia would not, however, agree to allow demarcation to proceed until Eritrea withdraws from the TSZ and allows UNMEE to begin monitoring the area again. Tekeda added that Ethiopia is willing to resolve the issue on a bilateral basis saying "We are willing to meet with Eritrea anywhere, at anytime." Tekeda described the current situation as extremely precarious in that, since the Eritreans occupied the TSZ, both nations' forces are now "eyeball to eyeball along the border." He said the prospect of a termination of the EEBC mandate with Eritrean forces still in place in the TSZ was a "ticking time bomb" and urged the UNSC not to take any action that would legitimize Eritrea.

13. (C/NF) AMB Wolff responded that the U.S. values its relationship with Ethiopia and is deeply concerned about the rising tensions in the region. AMB Wolff urged Ethiopia to cooperate with the EEBC and respect its commitments in the Algiers Agreements and refrain from any rhetoric that would heighten tensions. AMB Wolff added that UN DPA U/SYG Pascoe could play a helpful role in encouraging the Eritreans to be

more constructive.

Low Ethiopian Expectations for
September 7 EEBC Meeting

¶4. (C/NF) Tekeda said Ethiopia has very low expectations for the September 7 EEBC meeting at The Hague. Tekeda argued that Eritrea has taken an even more unconstructive and hard-line stance on border demarcation since the last meeting of the EEBC. He described Eritrean President Isaias as intent on using the demarcation process as a means of undermining the Ethiopian government and assigning blame for the May 1998 border war. Tekeda commented that instead of engaging in dialogue with Ethiopia, Eritrea is "wreaking havoc in the Ogaden and Somalia." Tekeda commented, "We know Asmara is sponsoring terrorism," but did not provide any specific information. AMB Wolff reiterated that the U.S. understood Ethiopia's concerns but said it is important that Ethiopia take as constructive an approach as possible during the EEBC meeting. Tekeda said Ethiopia would "do its part."

Work with Norway

¶5. (C/NF) AMB Wolff told Tekeda that Ethiopia should "think very carefully" before expelling more Norwegian diplomats from Addis Ababa. Tekeda responded that Norway had taken a "hubristic approach" to handling the border dispute and had become far too close to Asmara. Tekeda noted Norwegian Deputy FM Raymond Johansen's efforts to organize a September EEBC meeting in New York, despite Ethiopian objections, as an example of Norway's misguided handling of the issue. AMB Wolff responded that the U.S. did not sense an ulterior motive on the part of the Norwegians. Tekeda said his government is "not looking for a fight" and would welcome any productive efforts by third parties to resolve the border dispute.

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AND (D).

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